

Here leaps to life a different world from
Langland's.

A new sense of colour comes flowing from
that 'violet-
shadowed spring'. A new sense of beauty
dances after,
to the great rhythm of the hexameter, with
these figures
on the mountain-side/ soft-footed', 'fair and
lovely', 'fair
of song'. Langland's Holy Church does
indeed meet him,
too, on Malvern Hill, in the shape of 'a
lovely ladi of
lere (face) • in lynnenn yclothed'; but there
her concern
with earthly beauty ends and turns abruptly
to a sermon.
And elsewhere Langland casts only a
Puritanic frown at
the stained glass with which the friars are
so busy to
bedeck the white radiance of her eternity.
Certainly,
quite apart from his belief that the deities of
the pagan
were really devils, he would have been
bewildered at the
grace and gaiety that flower in this religion of
a yet poorer
peasantry than his, in a more barren and
distracted land.
Whatever darker superstitions from the past
persisted late
into Greek history, this eternal miracle
remains, that the
genius of the Greek race, working through
story-tellers
already nameless and forgotten before
Homer was born,
could symbolise the forces of life in shapes so
lovely and
so apt that civilisation has never equalled
them again.
Abandoned by faith, by their sheer beauty
the gods of
Hellas have re-conquered immortality. Whom
priest and
worshipper deserted, poet and painter have
saved. It is

possible that the names of Phoebus Apollo
and the golden
Aphrodite may still have a power to stir the
pulses of
posterity at some remote date when Jehovah
is no more
to Western civilisation than Marduk and
Amen-Ra. This
first great contrast at all events needs no
stressing, between
the pale abstractions of *Piers Plowman*—
Clergye, Studye,
Contricioun, Conscience, or Ymaginatif—
and shapes
like 'Dionysus rich in revelry' or 'Aphrodite
of the danc-
ing eyes* or, most typical of all, the Graces: